

Notes on Skybolt, 1962(4)

X

274

MAR 6 1964

Notes, 7 June 63

1

11 Dec. Before meeting, McN indicated he hoped Johnson might suggest the possibility of substituting a Polish force that would be assigned to NATO to replace Skybolt, indicating that the alternatives in the aide memoire were not likely to be accepted.

... and so, Bob, I would like to ask you a question: If you are going to cancel
the project, would it be possible to say that it is
technically infeasible? That would be very helpful. (note given)

know better than that. But can they it is impossible to meet
original standards (reliability | accuracy, cost) within original, or reasonable,
time schedule.

T. was now saying Sky was technically
impossible, or simply that it was now, for us, a
matter of cost, technical difficulties, & the fact that US
also had other weapons systems. M. not prepared to
say Sky was tech. impossible, but it was impossible
to achieve objectives which had been set for program in
time period planned. (US had spent money to assist
UK to maintain role, despite uncertainties & growing
knowledge of slight chance of success of Sky;
US had own problems of necessity for public statement
in far wild budget presentations.

(M. 5-6 B. for 100 missiles, without warheads).

T. Multilateral det. irrelevant: issue was UK det,
"without any strings or conditions."

T. UK might have Polaris by 1969, 100 missiles ^{at} ^{from} by 1974.

M. Polaris expensive: \$20M/missile on station.

36-40 training months per crew

T. Cancellation without reasonable alternative available.

would be "quite impossible" for UK. But: a) UK Skybolt program available but expensive,
b) US Polaris: cost too much to modify for V. Embury, c) Polaris, cost too much.

Memorandum to Mr. Bundy, 12 Dec 60

Memo of 27 March 1960, Macmillan - the; Conf.

Chief, no visitors present. US would make every reasonable effort to ensure Skybolt, would make it available for purchase by UK, contingent upon technical development, promise of timely retirement.

(Mac wanted to justify UK dropping of Blue Streak on April 15, 1960; announced then that V-bombers would be effective for several years, after which US too would look with favor on supplying UK with air-bounded missile.)

"In the same spirit of cooperation," UK will make available (Holy Loch).

Also, in Jan 1960, Bates-Nathanson, agreement that UK could purchase 2 Polaris subs & missiles, or just missiles, as contribution to NATO MRBM force.

US Skybolt sale indications? to be conditional on success of P.V.D. program (on time); difficulties stressed to UK; UK didn't mind program being stopped as long as it wasn't dropped. But US has spent about \$2.50 M. on UK about \$38 M. 3-2 about \$500 M. total

13 Dec.

1000: read Mc-T discussion of 11 Dec. Referred to

Bink. L. 5.22. 6.50 in Paris: Also British, NATO

control of MM missiles in US; answer to UK claim that

UK let itself "become a target" until 4 July 1954. Also,

McV has approved MMRRM, report on technical grounds

in comparison with MM in US. OK - UK NATO have

MM in US Co,

[Note: the version with a vague, conditional assurance
to "say - or?" - was used by him in political debate, because "commitment" is
"conditional".]

Skylark: 2001.

Although we found good progress, Skylark & Skylark
have become linked in UK domestic politics; although
more was said in debate that Skylark was only in
development. (Due from 64; now slipped)

Cost; accuracy; reliability (and more complex than
any other missile; fast-moving platform; expense, location;
accuracy).

Plutonium Committee recommended cancel it in 1959;
so did ASAC, WSEG in 1960.

British told of trouble in 1960, 1961 (Hypersonic),
1962 (latest Nov 3, 9 phone to Thompson; he
said UK had or would consider alternatives).

However, files are inadequate because much of correspondence
was Presidential; should get permission to examine this

Shyball:

B.S. 22 Jan: McN hadn't really anticipated strength
of British reaction. Telegram had been received
Nov. 9 that Shyball was being reconsidered, might be
cut. But they acted in Dec as if they had some brand
of idea. B.S. thinks they performed very stupidly; "He
didn't believe they could be that incompetent." [?]

Thinks they could have prepared ground by claiming that
V. London had been could penetrate at low level after all;
+ they could use Hound Day, at less cost than Polesis.
Even so, B.S. had recommended sending Rubel over to
explain things to Genslerman; but McN said No: "I'll
take care of it." Didn't expect reaction.

But, McN did warn Macmillan that Germans wouldn't like
Polesis deal: it would rub Germans nose in discrimination,
lose support for British entry into Common Market. Mac
said: Well's our brains will take care of it.

... of news ... common ... negative ...
... in ... work to

... He pointed
... had had a deterrent effect
on us.

... We had refused help to the Germans because of our concern
of what might happen in Germany. If we should assist the
French, this would not ~~help~~ change ~~de~~ at all, but pressure
in Germany would rise.

Ball pointed out we had...

20 Dec

Q: "Actually, the whole thing is ridiculous." What do 7-8 UK units add to existing nuclear strength, which is enough to blow up the world? So why does UK want it? Partly a question of "keeping up with the Joneses," which is human. We have not yet reached the stage of a melting pot of nations. So countries which have played a great role in history must retain their dignity. ... The UK does not want to be just a clown, or a satellite. The UK wants a nuclear force not only for defence, but in want of menace to its existence, which the UK might have to meet; for example: when K wound his rockets about at Time of Day, or when that fellow Qasbi got elected and Kuwait was threatened.

Ans: w.r.t. Kuwait, doubtless the UK Gov in power in 1970 would have to decide whether it was still a live issue. He assumed that the UK did not have the intention of using nuclear weapons against Qasbi.

... need to increase conventional forces. So long as Berlin existed as a problem, there was danger of war.

Q: if all this effort & expense were to be borne, it must mean to British people that they were thereby keeping up with the Joneses. [trip must use the words "improve national interests."]. ... British power must be the power. ... if we were to disappear, there would have to be a substitute in some way. ... political power.

Once thought great production unit. Making systems more than cost.
We thought it was important to keep the attention of the
Germans in particular on conventional weapons because of Berlin,
although if it were not for Berlin Europe could be defended
with four divisions and a nuclear strategy.

PM: ... The alternative to a Polaris agreement was to say this is a
complicated system — the Americans won't give it to us —
we will go on and make it eventually and be free. This
would be better than putting a British sailor aboard ship
to have tea with the Portuguese. To give up would mean
that Britain was not the nation that had gone through its
previous history. We should consider that if the people who
wanted to give up in Britain came to power, who would
make the better ally? Those were the ones we were
supporting in Britain by our policies. It was true that
Germany was dangerous, but not as much as before the war,
because the whole balance had changed, and there were
now two super-powers. Either Britain must stay in the
nuclear club or be forced to resign and we would have a
permanent series of Fifties.

... We would not engage in anything petty. We could stay at
what we had.

... Above: Churchill had told him in 1945 that in logic it was
unavoidable to have the war but they had gone on. There were lots of

Bill: situation late 1940.

Some: limits.

PM: ~~US~~ there were considerable circumstances [short of absolute necessity]

in which the UK would want to make policy by having Poland
at their disposal for national purposes. Otherwise, the British
people might want to do something else with their money.

NOTES

1) Mac got his way: get UK press described VFK as inevitable, ^{have} ~~have~~ as want. (He was thought to be trying for Lloyd.)

2) Mac got "supreme national interest"; but UK press dismissed this as follows:

3) Could have emphasized willingness to share costs; joint decision to drop. (esp., contain); Study of Pol. (Mac expected this out of Pearson).

4) East vs. Owen/Smith on Pearson desires.

5) Ball vs. PM on Pearson desire to participate in MCF.

6) McN desire to include French, reexamine policy, get him agree to ("If Lloyd had't happened, we should have invented it, to get us on track of a sound policy.") East willingness to reexamine. Ball/Owen reluctance.

7) PM insistence on ability to use forces in wide range of cases; Ball interpretation is narrow. (background briefing).

8) Pres vs. McN on need for more conventional.

9) Insistence by Ball, Bollen, Tylor, Owen, ... that Polaris not be offered; & that MCF commitments crucial.

10) PM insistence that all national forces ultimately be national control; VFK, M.V. Treatie descriptions of this vs. Ball/Owen attempt to create force that "cannot" be left/destroyed.

Notes Dec. 13

Perhaps not costs factor weighing UK about continuing Skybolt units:

a) US consultation means UK would be buying missile that US rejects for its own use;

b) UK loose to interpret US action as sign US trying to accelerate end of UK independent nuclear power

(given context: Robinson speech, etc.)

McG: mem of meeting with Pore, Dec. 10

McN agreed with McG impression of earlier, that UK might not have bought Sky in the end anyway.

McN did not believe UK would be pleased by any of his 3 alternatives (UK must remain dev. costs of Sky & buy what they wanted; c) adapt Ground Dy; d) UK partic. in multilateral force). I thought we might consider, at some stage in 'mgt', a proposal to give the UK access to a more up-to-date weapons system on condition that venture become ^{multi}multilateral if & when a multilateral force should be developed. Such a course might conceivably be taken ^{2.3.1}with Polaris.

He ^{while} still, not disagreeing, indicated deep concern for with different issues for UK by consultation of Sky. Appeared to incline toward a major effort to assist them in meeting remaining development costs, so cost would not be for ¹they would not be it.

... a line that it should

... that was the case

Pres. Nixon:

Cuba shows NATO forces presently in being lead to push us, in moments of emergency, toward the awesome choice between alternatives which we must make every effort to avoid, Chomskian solace and surrender.

" [Dilemma Strategy] [Due to bilateral nature of TN war.]

Our common and individual efforts will offer the signals we send to Moscow about our unity and determination. A central problem for a democracy, and an Alliance of Democracies, is how to get dictators ^{to understand} in time (sic) that the democracies will defend themselves and our vital interests — how to avoid the crime of tempting them.

... At the very least, it seems clear to me that at a time when defense becomes increasingly expensive

[menaced against SU threat] governments can hardly permit the percentage of their GNP devoted to defense to decline.